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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: SWEDISH FM CARL BILDT ON  
AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 120807

Classified By: AMB Matthew Barzun for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Corrected copy adding reftel, addressees.

¶1. (C) Summary: On November 24, Swedish FM Carl Bildt told the Ambassador that if EU development efforts were better coordinated, "we could have twice the effect for half the cost." The EU "will be as supportive as we can" when the results of the U.S. Af/Pak strategy review are made public in December. On the idea of international conferences, Bildt thinks foreign ministers should first convene in Kabul to map out a political strategy with Afghan leaders. Only after that should there be a larger international conference to generate support, such as the one being offered by UK PM Brown. EU election monitors will issue a report with recommendations in the near future. Bildt said it is essential that these be implemented before next year's parliamentary elections. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador asked Bildt if he was happy with the new EU Blue Book for Afghanistan. Bildt replied that he was mainly happy that the report had finally come out, because previously, there had been no "database" of all that EU Member States are doing in the region. Bildt noted the EU spends roughly one billion Euros in development assistance to Afghanistan annually. "But do we spend it wisely? No, because it's totally uncoordinated. We could have twice the effect for half the cost," Bildt said. He added that one possible reason for the lack of EU donor coordination to date may relate to the focus until now on a "political strategy."

¶3. (C) Bildt said he thought it was "wise" for the United States to wait until the inauguration of President Karzai before publicizing the results of the ongoing AfPak strategy review. "There must be an Afghan partner" for any successful political strategy, he added. Bildt said that once the strategy review is unveiled, "we will be as supportive as we can." On the issue troop levels, Bildt stated that it was a "very localized war, with very different situations in the South and East." He said, "More forces probably are needed in the South and East, but not necessarily in the North where we are." (Note: the Swedish PRT based in Mazar-e Sharif has just under 500 troops.)

¶4. (C) On the issue of an international conference for Afghanistan, Bildt said that there is an ongoing debate in Europe. "I'd prefer a small conference of foreign ministers in Kabul after Karzai forms his government," he stated, adding that it would be important for a first conference to be in Afghanistan. "We want to dictate to Karzai, but we do not want to be perceived as dictating to him by the Afghan people." The focus of the Kabul conference should be to

agree on a political strategy with Afghan political players, Bildt added. Only after that should there be a "big international conference to mobilize support," such as the January conference UK PM Brown has proposed.

15. (C) Bildt bemoaned the inability of the international community to follow up on its own recommendations for Afghanistan. For example, EU election monitors in 2005 drafted a detailed report filled with recommendations -- none of which were implemented. Saying that a new report from EU election monitors was expected in "the next few days," Bildt emphasized that it would be essential that any recommendations be implemented before next year's parliamentary elections. "If we don't put the changes in place, that will kill us," Bildt stated, clarifying that international confidence would be more affected than that of the Afghans themselves. "They expect a high level of fraud," he said.  
BARZUN